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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 002782

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SUBJECT: BOUCHER VISITS BALOCHISTAN

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Peter Bodde, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On June 14, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher made his first visit to Balochistan. Inspector General of Police Tariq Khosa discussed the need for more contacts with his counterparts in Afghanistan and Iran and expressed doubt that Afghan refugees would want to return home any time soon. Members of Balochistan's Provincial Assembly complained that their resolutions are frequently ignored by the government and said that the chances of free and fair elections in Balochistan were very poor. Chief Minister Jam Muhammad Yousaf provided an exceptionally rosy picture of the province, which was in marked contrast to the observations of provincial assembly members.

¶2. (U) Boucher also visited a Police Training Center and a voters' list display center in Quetta as well as the Chaman border crossing and an International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau-funded Frontier Corps Outpost at Spina Tiza. Pishin District Frontier Corps Commandant Colonel Massud emphasized the importance of cross-border cooperation with the Afghan government to keep important trade lines open and control illegal crossings. End Summary.

Increasing Police Writ, Skills and Cross-Border Cooperation

¶3. (C) On June 14, Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher, accompanied by Charge d'Affaires Peter Bodde and Senior Advisor Caitlin Hayden, made his first trip to Balochistan. He began meetings in Quetta with the new Inspector General of Police Tariq Khosa. Khosa discussed the measures he had taken to increase security in the province, such as boosting the numbers of police constables and increasing the anti-terror force.

Khosa was optimistic that the conversion of 29 of the province's B8 areas (tribal areas with no government writ) to A8 areas (where there is a recognized police and government presence) will be complete by the end of the year.

He insisted that there was no insurgency problem in Balochistan and called militant groups' periodic acts of violence low-level sabotage.⁸ Khosa stressed that with elections coming up later this year, sub-nationalist groups in Balochistan would not want to be associated with anti-government activity and that now was the time to bring them on board by giving them government jobs. Khosa added that he had inducted a number of police recruits from the Marri tribe, whose leaders have violently opposed the government.

14. (C) Khosa emphasized more face-to-face contact was needed with his law enforcement counterparts in Afghanistan and Iran to better coordinate security. Khosa complained, for example, that the Balochistan Liberation Army received its funding and instructions from leadership taking shelter in Afghanistan. (Comment: Khosa exuded confidence at the meeting and generally downplayed the serious challenge his police forces face. He did not mention, for instance, the suicide bomber who detonated himself inside the Quetta District Court complex in February, killing 15 -- an event that rattled even veteran Balochistan observers. Within hours of the Assistant Secretary's departure, gunmen sprayed a passing van with

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bullets and killed seven Army soldiers. End Comment.)

15. (C) Khosa said that it would be difficult to convince Balochistan's Afghan refugees to return home, since most of

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them had lived in Pakistan for the last 20 years and many have obtained fake Pakistani national identity cards. The religious political parties (which rule Balochistan's provincial government in coalition with the Pakistan Muslim League) did not want to address the issue because these Afghans are a vote base, Khosa said. He estimated that there were approximately 350,000 Afghans living illegally in Quetta and said police have deported 500-600 in the past several months. Khosa was upbeat about security in Jungle Pir Alizai and Girdi Jungle refugee camps, however, and said that Girdi Jungle is no longer a no-go area for police. Frontier Corps ingress/egress monitoring of Jungle Pir Alizai camp has effectively limited access by criminal elements.

16. (C) Khosa closed by saying that while his work was difficult and vitally important, Balochistan, and Pakistan as a whole, would only be stable by employing a three-pronged strategy of security, education and economic development.⁸ The most important thing the United States could do, he said, is invest in education. Boucher agreed and stated that the United States invests nearly \$100 million a year in Pakistan and would continue to invest in the education sector.

Provincial Assembly Members Ask For Help

17. (U) Meeting at the USAID-funded Provincial Assembly Information and Technology Resource Center, provincial assembly members complained that their assembly's resolutions were frequently ignored. The assembly, had, for example, rejected the government's plans for increasing the number of military cantonments in the province; converting "B" law enforcement areas to "A" areas; developing Gwadar port; and building the India-Pakistan-Iran pipeline. Nevertheless, all of these projects were moving forward. One member said that Balochis had no control over their province's own resources. They worried outsiders coming to the province would eventually outnumber the Baloch themselves, which was why control of Gwadar port should be handed over to the province.

¶8. (U) Members expressed pessimism at the prospect of free and fair elections in Balochistan. Without an independent election commission or judicial system, credibility was impossible, one member said. The election commission and intelligence agencies support the ruling party, he continued, and the Commission refuses to meet with opposition political parties.

¶9. (U) Another member complained that it was difficult for Baloch students to get scholarships to study within Pakistan and even more difficult for them to get visas to study abroad in places like the U.S. The Charge replied that the Embassy could start outreach efforts in Balochistan in the form of information briefings for student exchanges and training for the online visa application process. Another member accused the intelligence agencies of training terrorists in Balochistan.

On the Other Hand, Chief Minister Assures That All Is Well

¶10. (C) Balochistan's Chief Minister Jam Muhammad Yousaf (a compromise candidate of the Pakistan Muslim League and Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal coalition government) told Assistant Secretary Boucher that he was happy with Balochistan's

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overall security situation. There had also been progress over

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the last five years in the areas of health, education, water, and devolution, but Yousaf admitted that it was difficult to spread development equitably because of Balochistan's sparse, dispersed population.

¶11. (C) Yousaf said outside investment had helped Balochistan. He also noted that efforts like Gwadar port development had started under Prime Minister Sharif's regime in the 1990's and had once enjoyed the full support of Balochistan's nationalist political parties. Although Gwadar Port did not provide many jobs to Balochis, other investments did -- particularly in the mining and marble industries. When asked about the prospects for more equitable revenue sharing between the federal and provincial governments, Yousaf said that the Sui Gas agreement (and the establishment of royalty rates) had been concluded in 1956, when Balochistan led the country in energy production. The situation had changed, Yousaf said, and other areas were being developed for oil and gas extraction, producing higher royalties for the provinces. (Note: A frequent complaint from Balochistan's politicians is that Sui's wellhead price is much lower than those in other provinces. End Note.)

¶12. (C) When asked about the nationalist situation, Yousaf said that 20,000 - 30,000 Balochis had taken shelter in Afghanistan to avoid violence, but that militants like Baloch Marri still crossed the Pak-Afghan border. To help settle the situation and give displaced people a boost, Yousaf said, he helped to resettle displaced people into Dera Bugti. (Comment: The displaced people Yousaf helped resettle were from a clan locked in a bitter blood feud with deceased tribal leader Nawab Bugti's people. The incomers' presence has increased tension in the area. End Comment.)

¶13. (C) Yousaf said that accusations of militant activity in Balochistan's religious schools (madrassas) was overstated, and that there was no substance to the allegation that there is a "Quetta Shura" of Taliban leaders. "Mullah Omar is not in Pakistan," Yousaf said.

Frontier Corps Increasing Security on Pak-Afghan Border

¶14. (C) Pishin District Frontier Corps Commandant Colonel

Massud told Boucher that the Frontier Corps needs to change its strategic focus from anti-smuggling to border control to best meet Pakistan's security challenges. To this end, the Frontier Corps has constructed walls to prevent cross-border movement; installed security lights; established new border posts; and increased border patrols. Illegal border crossings have increased substantially in the past year -- from a 2006 annual total of 1,719 to 2,511 so far in 2007 alone, he said. Most of these crossings could be attributed to people's attempts to escape security operations in southern Afghanistan, but Frontier Corps troops have seized a large number of arms, ammunition, and narcotics from smugglers as well.

¶15. (C) Massud complained that Pakistan was attempting to control movement across the Pak-Afghan border, but Afghan authorities had expressed little interest in providing real support. Afghanistan, for example, rejected Pakistan's request to install biometric scanners at the Chaman border crossing, and the number of Pakistan border posts dwarfed their Afghan counterparts.

¶16. (C) Cross-border trade was a vital link for people living

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in and around Chaman, Massud said, and there was a large market that lay just inside the Afghan border. On average, over 8,000 Pakistani nationals cross the Chaman border into Afghanistan daily, but the Afghan government had just decreed that small vehicles and motorcycles would not be permitted to cross into Afghanistan for security reasons. This arbitrary rule, he said, would create problems for Chaman's residents.

Site Visits Show Ground Truth

¶17. (U) Assistant Secretary Boucher's visit to Balochistan included three other stops:

-- Boucher's visit to a police training center in Quetta coincided with a basic investigation skills class provided by U.S. law enforcement trainers. Trainees were learning how to take fingerprints.

-- At a draft voter roll display center in Quetta, Boucher learned that only three voters had visited the center to check their names over the last two days. (Note: Pakistan's Election Commission had just started a 21-day display period of the new draft voter rolls to allow voters to confirm their names are on the list and, if not, provide a chance to register. Political parties and other observers have expressed alarm at the low number of voters registered (approximately 50 million) compared to old voters' list (approximately 70 million) and the estimated number of eligible voters (82-86 million). Even the Election Commissioner has admitted that at least 10 million more voters need to be registered to make the next general elections credible; however, this is unlikely to happen during the display period. End Note.)

-- Boucher also visited two sites controlled by the Frontier Corps: the busy Chaman Border crossing and a remote border outpost in the barren, ridged landscape of Spina Tiza, built with International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau funds. At both sites, Frontier Corps officers were proud to discuss their recent successes in controlling the Pak-Afghan border and were interested in working with the U.S. to bolster their capabilities.

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